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ABSTRACT

To encourage the interest in research and statistics of students in grades five and six in a rural school in Arkansas, the researcher and the elementary school principal investigated areas in which the students could participate in decision-making. Several possibilities emerged: quality of a good teacher, school awards and honors, school rules, items to sell in the school store, and items to sell for school fund-raisers. From this list was generated a questionnaire which was administered to all 200 fifth and sixth grades. The data were analyzed and then presented to the students, who engaged in discussion of the findings. Findings from the six questions are reported, with actions taken by the elementary principal. (MNS)

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STIMULATING RESEARCH APPRECIATION IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADES

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STIMULATING RESEARCH APPRECIATION IN THE FIFTH AND SIXTH GRADES

To encourage the two hundred fifth and sixth grade students enrolled in rural Vilonia Elementary School in central Arkansas, to continue their studies and further their education, Principal Barbara Fuller invited a series of speakers to stimulate their interest in various topics. Entitled "Your Dreams Can Come True", the program's speakers discussed speech pathology, flight and aviation, and research and statistics.

To pique the interest of the students in research and statistics, the researcher and the elementary principal investigated areas in which the students could participate in decision-making. Several possibilities emerged: most important quality of a good teacher, school awards and honors, school rules, items to sell in the school store, and items to sell for school fund-raisers.

From this list was generated a questionnaire (See Appendix A.) which was administered to all fifth and sixth grade students. The data was collected, analyzed, and then presented to the students. The spirited discussion of the findings seemed to indicate a heightened interest and/or awareness on the part of the students with regard to research and statistics.

A discussion of the questionnaire, item-by-item, follows. Included in the discussion are the findings and actions taken by the elementary principal.

The first question asked, "What is the most popular item sold in the school store?". The results were as follows.

	5th Graders		6th Graders	
	N	%	N	%
Pencils	78	78	64	67
Erasers	17	17	17	18
Notebooks	4	4	9	9
Paper	1	1	5	5

Because of their interest in school store items, the store now carries a wider selection of pencils, tablets, folders, and also stocks poster board.

Question two was, "In our school fundraiser, what would be the best selling item?". The results were as follows.

	5th Graders		6th Graders	
	N	%	N	%
Candy	54	55	52	55
Crafts	26	26	31	33
Flower Bulbs	14	14	9	10
Easter Items	5	5	2	2

Because of these responses, students sold ceramic crafts and flower bulbs as fundraising projects, and will be selling candy for Easter. Coincidentally, these fundraisers have raised more money than previous attempts.

Question three was, "What do you think is the most important quality of a good teacher?". The results were as follows.

	5th Graders		6th Graders	
	N	%	N	%
Sense of Humor	52	53	61	61
Intelligence	22	22	21	21
High Expectations	20	20	14	14
Compassion	5	5	4	4

The results of this question were left to the individual teachers to respond to as they felt was appropriate.

Question four was, "Should you be taught soccer rules during P.E.?". The results were as follows.

	5th Graders		6th Graders	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	60	63	76	76
No	36	38	24	24

Students are now taught soccer rules in their physical education classes.

Question five was, "What can the school do differently or better to honor students each six weeks?". The results of those who offered ideas were as follows.

	5th Graders		6th Graders	
	N	%	N	%
Recess	15	20	22	31
Party	12	16	20	28
Treat	11	14	12	17
Awards	11	14	11	15
Money	11	14		
OK as is	9	12		
Gift	7	9		
Movie			6	8

Awards besides ribbons are now given to deserving students. The principal contacted area businesses and they provided a variety of coupons which students may redeem in their stores. In addition, the school is participating in a reading contest sponsored by Pizza Inn. Individual students who reach their goals receive free pizzas. Entire classes completing expectations receive a pizza party at the end of the school year. To further encourage students, the principal will invite students achieving their goals to a banquet or similar function at the end of the academic year.

Question six was, "Do you think you should have to receive an "A" in conduct to receive an "All A's" ribbon?". The results were as follows.

	5th Graders		6th Graders	
	N	%	N	%
Yes	61	62	39	41
No	37	38	57	59

Due to the split decision, this question was resolved by the principal and fifth and sixth grade faculty. They agreed with the fifth graders: An "A" in conduct is now required to receive and "All A's" ribbon.

Research provides an opportunity to involve students in actions which affect them, from which they may learn responsibility and gain insights into the thoughts and actions of others. An early start offers children the chance to grow with and into an information-based decision-making environment. The fact that this presentation/study occurred is evidence of the potential that research discussions and practice have in the elementary classroom.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

FIFTH and SIXTH GRADE
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is the most popular item sold in the school store?

○ loose-leaf paper ○ notebooks ● pencils ○ erasers

2. In our school fundraiser, what would be the best selling item?

○ candy ○ country crafts ● flower bulbs ○ Easter items

3. What do you think is the most important quality of a good teacher?

○ intelligence ○ compassion ● sense of humor ○ high expectations

4. Should you be taught soccer rules during P.E.?

○ yes ● no

5. What can the school do differently or better to honor students each six weeks?

6. Do you think you should have to receive an "A" in conduct to receive an "All A's" ribbon?

○ yes ● no